

Best Practices for Re-opening Your Workspace

May 4th, 2020

Employees want to return to a space where they feel confident they can be productive, social, and safe.

Across the world, businesses are navigating uncharted territory as they prepare for re-entry to the office, business and workplace. Meanwhile, everyone is asking - **Can we go back to the office? When? And how?**

Guidelines and recommendations continue to evolve as new data and information is available. It is important to monitor updated recommendations provided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Links to these guidelines, as well as additional resources, are at the end of this publication for your reference.

As an employer, your workforce is your most important resource. Prioritizing the safety of employees should be your main consideration as you analyze your physical conditions before allowing your team back into the office. These guidelines will help you understand how best to assess and manipulate your physical workplace environments, and focuses on spatial and operational considerations beyond the obvious hand washing and social distancing. As you formulate your individual back-to-work plan, please also consider the less concrete but equally important issues related to accessibility, inclusion, and providing equitable options for individual team members. Also note that it is imperative to clearly communicate your re-entry plan with your workforce, clients, visitors and guests in advance of re-opening so that they understand how the company is proceeding and how they will actively participate. Our summarized guidelines are as follows:

Guidelines 1-7 should be in place prior to when your office re-opens; and guidelines 5-7 should continue even after re-opening as well.

- 1. Provide a 6ft separation, especially at desking locations.**
- 2. Install physical barriers to minimize face to face contact.**
- 3. Evaluate your ventilation system with your facilities department.**
- 4. Add visual cues to indicate safe social separation.**
- 5. Provide the proper personal protection equipment to your staff and visitors.**
- 6. Increase both frequency and visibility of cleaning services.**
- 7. Be diligent and continue existing social distancing and protocols.**



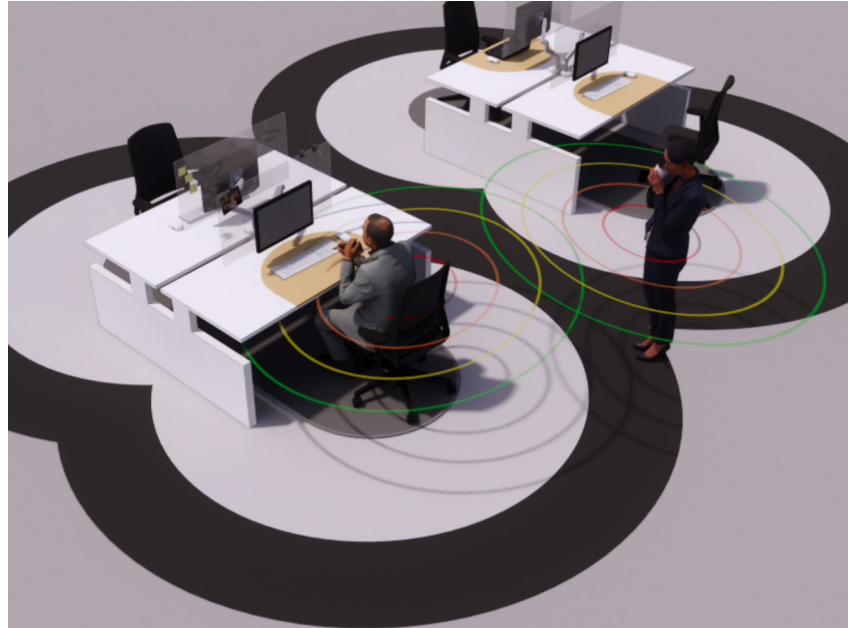
TMA Systems, KKT Architects, Inc.

Guidelines that should be in place prior to re-opening your workplace. (1-4)

1. Provide a 6ft separation, especially at desking locations.

Maintaining physical separation may be easier for private offices, but it can also be accomplished in open office and workstation environments. For most open layouts there are ways to thoughtfully spread out your team and reduce density, such as:

- Physically move desks or rotate desks to provide more of a 90-degree angle configuration.
- Stagger seats if furniture cannot be re-arranged, removing every other workstation in a checkerboard layout to spread people out farther.
- For particularly dense areas, consider a partial or phased back-to-work plan so not everyone is in the office at the same time, or on the same days.
- Stagger your traditional start and stop times so not everyone in your office is arriving at the same time. This will reduce congestion in common areas, lobbies and elevators.
- Discourage the use of shared or hotel type desking and shared equipment. Maintain one person per day per desk and allocate the proper cleaning procedures between uses.



© Copyright Cushman & Wakefield 2020

2. Install physical barriers to minimize face to face contact.

Respiratory etiquette is especially important during these times and beyond communicating reminders prior to re-occupancy, installing physical barriers will visually address expectations.

- Install screens or panels between any desks that are closer than 6' apart. There is no requirement that these screens be a certain size, but our recommendation would be standing height (5'-6" above the floor) and the full width of the workstation (especially for those desks where team members are facing each other).
- Screens could be clear hard plastic, fabric or even furniture panels. There are both temporary and permanent solutions available and you may even have options to utilize furniture you already own like moveable white boards.
- At entry points and areas of engagement with visitors and clients, such as lobbies and reception desks, it is especially important to provide a barrier (clear plexiglass, glass or other) to separate your team from any outside guests that arrive into your space.

3. Evaluate your ventilation system with your facilities department.

- Install new air filters and review options to upgrade to high-efficiency or HEPA filters. A more frequent filter replacement management plan is also encouraged and should be communicated should you enact a new policy.
- Discuss additional options with facilities, an architect, or engineer, for methods to increase or improve the ventilation within the office, including evaluating the directional flows, proximity to air vents, negative pressure areas, or other considerations.

4. Add visual cues to indicate safe social separation.

- Tape or mark the floor near the reception desk, or other gathering areas (such as next to HR or Accounting) to indicate a safe standing space, and safe waiting areas when more than one person is in queue.
- Review your shared communal spaces (break rooms, lounges) and either remove furniture, or tape off chairs, or sections of sofas that should not be used in order to maintain proper 6 ft separation.
- Remove every other chair in meeting and conference rooms (checkerboard style) to ensure safe distances as well as reduced seating capacity for any meetings or gatherings.
- Encourage standing meetings in larger open areas and tape off floor spaces to indicate where it is safe to stand.

Guidelines that occur before but also continue after your office re-opening. (5-7)

5. Provide the proper personal protection equipment to your staff and visitors.

- Provide personal protective equipment, such as masks or disposable masks, to reduce virus spread, as possible when supplies are available.
- Provide hand sanitizer, as well as soap and washing stations at prime locations throughout your office. Entry access points, common areas like break rooms, conference rooms and bathrooms, copy stations or other areas that multiple employees frequent would be ideal.
- Post temporary or permanent signage with cleanliness protocols and personal etiquette throughout the office. Focus signage in the break rooms near coffee machines, microwaves and other devices that are touched frequently by multiple people. Additionally, consider not utilizing common refrigerators, ice machines, a coffee makers for the immediate re-opening to reduce virus spread. Ask employees to bring food, drinks and other supplies as needed from home.
- Remove magazines and other loose shared items (like pens, markers, or other) from public lobby areas, conference rooms and other communal spaces.



Bank of Oklahoma, KKT Architects, Inc.

6. Increase frequency and visibility of janitorial and cleaning services.

- Institute more regular cleaning of primary surfaces (break room counters, desks, etc.) and ensure that the cleaning services and cleaning schedules are both visible and communicated to your team. There is psychological benefit of improved safety when your team and visitors are witness to the actual services.
- Consider adding a cleaning chart to indicate publicly when the latest cleaning occurred. Utilize clear or graphic signage to explain your cleaning regime and your cleaning precautions to both your team and to your visitors.
- Investigate furniture materials – are they easily cleanable? If not, consider covering workspaces with disposable paper mats that are removed daily. Also research the proper cleaning supplies based on the actual surface product. Most material manufacturers make these readily available.
- Minimize unnecessary surfaces to facilitate cleaning. Encourage employees to remove any decorative items at their desks or throughout the office (and take those home) so that their desk surfaces are more visible and accessible to cleaning.
- Several local cleaning companies can provide full (and certified) fumigation disinfectant services and this should be considered as an option before re-opening; as well as if and when anyone in your office has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.



© Copyright Materialise 2020

7. Be diligent and continue existing social distancing and hygiene protocols.

- Continue to promote handwashing regularly.
- Replace high touch items (doors and trashcans) with no-touch options. Keep doors open during business hours and remove lids from trash cans or other receptacles to help mitigate contamination.
- Include touchless thermometers in the office at entry points or in common spaces (like break rooms) to check temperatures of employees (and any visitors) daily.
- Minimize face-to-face interaction by promoting virtual meetings when possible. If you have not implemented new and improved ways for employees and clients to engage virtually, now is the time to consider your technology options to encourage remote and digital communications.
- Evaluate your network security and internet bandwidth to facilitate remote work and virtual engagement.
- Encourage team that upon entering the workplace to go straight to their desks, following any marked wayfinding, and to keep their hands and belongings to themselves along the way.
- Remind your team to continue to be respectful of others in the office and to wear masks in public and on the way to and from the office.



Communicate with your team how to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19, incubation periods, and self-quarantine protocols so that everyone can actively participate in keeping your team, your customers, and your business functioning safely. It is imperative to continue to encourage basic hygiene etiquette like hand washing, as well as to encourage sick employees to stay home. As stated previously, to promote safety in the workplace during this re-entry period, your team should have regular, active, and clear communication protocols about the steps that you are taking in preparing the workplace. The timing of such preparations, as well as city guidelines may provide you more guidance on the best time to re-open the office.

Conclusion

Employees want to return to a space where they feel confident they can be productive, social, and safe. And safety includes more than just your physical surroundings, but also your emotional and mental safety; knowing that your company is taking the current situation seriously by addressing those concerns, will lead to a more successful workplace re-entry. If you would like personalized advice, a workspace review, or individualized recommendations, the KKT design team is knowledgeable and we would be happy to help you analyze your facilities. Please give us a call and we will discuss and assist you with the best recommendations in a timely and efficient manner.



Owners, Sarah Gould, AIA, A4LE & Andy Kinslow, AIA

About KKT

KKT Architects is a full-service architecture, interior design and engineering firm based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Our team is composed of knowledgeable, open-minded individuals and we are always exploring new ideas and strategies with our clients. Our expertise in both healthcare and commercial office design make KKT a logical first choice to help you navigate the unprecedented challenges facing the business world today. As workplace experts, we have experience providing building design, space planning, interior design, remodeling and furniture selection services for corporations, building owners, tenants and leasing agents. Our professional design team is skilled at developing engaging and productive spaces that are accommodating to a wide range of workforce and work styles.

Additional Resources

- **Tulsa Health Department; Business Reopening Guidelines**
https://www.tulsa-health.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/General_ReopeningGuidance_0.pdf
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), as of April 30, 2020.**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- **U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA,) Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19, as of April 30, 2020.**
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- **Steelcase, Navigating What's Next: The Post-COVID Workplace, released in April 2020.**
<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Aascds%3AUS%3Aa4a1aca1-01c2-48d7-8601-9014a640298a>
- **JLL; Re-Entry | Strategically prepare your buildings, space and people**
[https://img04.en25.com/Web/JLLAmericas/%7B4ee59ea6-766a-44ff-9b7d-6cef91471771%7D_JLL_\(Re\)entry_brochure.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua&utm_campaign=FOW-Weekly-AMER-US-National-CS-General-04282020-EMKTG-NEWS-159406&name=FOW-AMER-US-National-CS-General-04292020-EMKTG-NUR-NEWS-Bi-Weekly-28-Correction-81208](https://img04.en25.com/Web/JLLAmericas/%7B4ee59ea6-766a-44ff-9b7d-6cef91471771%7D_JLL_(Re)entry_brochure.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Eloqua&utm_campaign=FOW-Weekly-AMER-US-National-CS-General-04282020-EMKTG-NEWS-159406&name=FOW-AMER-US-National-CS-General-04292020-EMKTG-NUR-NEWS-Bi-Weekly-28-Correction-81208)
- **JLL; COVID-19: Top 10 focus areas for workplace re-entry checklist**
<https://www.us.jll.com/en/views/covid19-top-10-focus-areas-for-workplace-re-entry>
- **Cushman Wakefield; The 6 Feet Office**
<https://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/netherlands/six-feet-office>



Tri-county Tech Student Services, KKT Architects, Inc.